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Statement submitted by Global Forum on Human Settlements, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Urbanization and urban development is at the crossroads where we are increasingly witnessing a series of social problems emerge in different forms and scales. To get the upper hand in this unprecedentedly complicated urban battle, we must take immediate and substantial measures and actions towards a truly sustainable low-carbon city. As embedded in the initiative for International Green Model City launched by us which aims to guide the development of green low-carbon city pilots, a sustainable city must be able to stand the test of three pillars of sustainable development: economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability and social equity. Where, however, are we going to find the solutions? The International Green Model City has 12 principles at its core, including Net zero carbon, Zero waste, Sustainable environment, Green planning and design, Green transportation and linkage, Green infrastructure, Green building, Green economy, Green living, Harmonious society, Sustainable culture and heritage and Smart community. We have no way out of this intangible web of crises but rebuild, renovate and reform our cities by adopting the aforementioned 12 overarching principles, in particular in developing areas and regions, to eventually realize green, low-carbon, and sustainable cities for the following actions need to be taken, urgently:

(a) More attention should be devoted to the small and medium cities where more financial support, institutional willingness and technical knowhow are in dire need to unlock the huge potential of economic growth, employment generation and ecological construction.

(b) In the fast urbanizing world, particularly, housing has become the dominant indicator of measuring the well-being of people, while the young, the underprivileged, and the marginalized residing in cities are among the most vulnerable groups. We must step up effort implementing a package of programs (youth development scheme, home improvement projects, and the like) targeting these disadvantaged regardless of regions.

(c) Making the city planning and design right and scientific from the start is the ultimate solution to urban transportation issue, high energy consumption, air pollution and social segregation.

(d) We must empower people, foster participation and enable cooperative networks towards sustainable cities and sustainable urbanization.

(e) We must protect environmental goods and services, ecosystems, agricultural soil, promote efficiency and sustainability in the use of urban land, ensuring participation and inclusion of citizens in land use planning.

(f) We must enable continuous improvement on cities based on accountability, transparency, and good governance, to ensure the greater benefit for the greater good.

(g) We need to promote the localization of the sustainable development goals, targets and indicators, which will allow a successful implementation of the post-2015 agenda at a local level.

(h) Public-private partnerships can help to finance, build, operate and maintain infrastructure and public transport services in a cost-efficient way.